

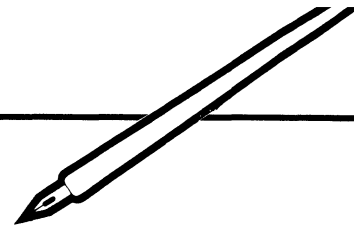


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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The Covenant and the Children of Believers

The Schilder year has come and gone. Yet his work remains of significance also on our continent. Living proof of Schilder's relevance is seen in a recent set of articles in the paper of the *Protestant Reformed Churches*, the *Standard Bearer* by Prof. David Engelsma, entitled "The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers." This series of articles began in March 1990 and concluded in September, 1990. However, the series was prolonged by an extensive debate with two elders from the Netherlands Reformed Congregations. The Canadian Reformed Churches are also treated in Engelsma's exposition, and our response might more properly have come sooner. But the busy life in the College let these matters pile up. This way we also have the benefit of hearing him out to the end of his series before countering with our response.

Let me first summarize Engelsma's position. One can only laud his initial description of both the centrality and importance of the doctrine of the covenant in Scripture. One can agree with most of what he says. Engelsma begins with stressing the fact that the children of believers are included in the covenant. His concern is with the place of the children of the believers. Hence he points out that the covenant was made with Abraham and his offspring, (p. 270, March 15). And in a following issue he says that the children of believers are included in the covenant, (p. 294, April 1). In opposition to the Baptists who deny a place in the covenant to the children of believers, Engelsma says that our creeds are clear: they belong to God in the covenant!

Then Engelsma proceeds to confront the age-old problem concerning those children of believers who upon reaching the age of maturity do not accept the gospel in true faith. What are we to think of them? Engelsma says that we cannot presume them to be regenerated for this is contrary to Scripture and experience. Here, too, we can agree! Indeed, presumptive regeneration was the heart of the conflict of 1944!

Prof. Engelsma then proceeds to give three possible explanations concerning the meaning of the children of believers being included in the covenant. The first view he presents is that of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations and the Free Reformed Church. This view states that the children of believers are unregenerate and unsaved. But, living in a Christian environment, they have a better chance of being converted than other children. The second view he presents is that of the Canadian (and American Reformed Churches. Engelsma puts it this way:

All the children of believers without exception are in the covenant in this sense, that God promises them all salvation and extends to them all His covenant grace in Christ. However, the actual fulfilment of the promise, the actual reception of covenant grace, and the actual realization of the covenant with them personally depend upon their believing in Christ and thus taking hold of the covenant when they grow up." (p. 341, May 1, 1990).

Then Prof. Engelsma presents his own view, to which we shall return later.

Engelsma's critique

First, let us consider Engelsma's critique of the Netherlands Reformed and the Free Reformed position. This view, says Engelsma, must be rejected. "God does not merely put the children of believers in a more advantageous position, so as to make it likelier that they will be saved; but he establishes his covenant with them, so as to be their God," p. 341. Who could not agree?

Then the Canadian Reformed position gets its turn. This view, says Prof. Engelsma "conflicts with cardinal doctrines of the Word of God, doctrines which are precious to every Reformed man and woman." Three arguments are brought forward:

1. This view makes the promise of the covenant grace of God depend on the work and will of the covenant child. The covenant and its salvation are conditional and dependent on the faith of the child, and this is "diametrically opposed to the teaching of Scripture..." Here he quotes Rom. 9:16. It is also against the confession, says Engelsma, quoting the Canons of Dort, I/9,10 ("Election is not Based on Foreseen Faith" and "Election is based on God's Good Pleasure") and the Rejection of Errors I/3 (The act of faith is not the cause for salvation, but only God's good pleasure), Canons III/IV, Art. 14 (Faith is a gift of God), Rejection of Errors III/IV,6 (Faith is not an act of man but a gift of God). The basic argument: the Canadian Reformed position is Arminian.

2. This view implies that Christ's death for some persons fails to secure their redemption. At baptism God promises salvation to the children on the basis of Christ's blood shed for them. But some of these children perish. This denies the doctrine of limited atonement, "at least within the sphere of the covenant." Thus we are held to teach universal atonement. Again: the Canadian Reformed position is Arminian.

3. This view means that the promise of God fails in many cases. God's promises are considered to have failed. The Word of God is made of none effect. And this, too, is contrary to Scripture and confession.

Are we Arminian?

These are Engelsma's arguments. Before we consider them we must point out that he has not accurately represented the view of the Canadian Reformed Churches. We do not teach that God *extends* to all the children of believers His covenant grace. Rather, He includes them with their parents in the covenant of grace and He *promises* to them His covenant blessings in Christ, and includes with promise the demand to believe the gospel and to receive Christ's blessings in true faith. We also do not teach that the actual reception of covenant grace and the actual realization of the covenant depend on the faith of the children of believers. Rather, God fulfills His covenant promises in His time and in His way in the lives of the children of believers whom He chooses. We also confess that such faith is a work and gift of the LORD, accord-

ing to His sovereign good pleasure and electing love. Yet in this work, He is pleased to use the means. He fulfils His promise in the way of faith.

We then proceed to answer Prof. Engelsma's arguments:

1. Engelsma holds that we make the covenant and its salvation conditional and dependent on the faith of the child. But this is a fiction. As Prof. K. Schilder pointed out to Rev. Hoeksema long ago (!) it all depends on what one means by "conditional." If one means with this term that one can earn his salvation, or merit any part of it by his own act of believing or any other work, then we join in rejecting the word "conditional." But if one means by this term that God is pleased to establish certain means through which His covenant promises come to realization, then this term can never be disqualified. Indeed, there are many examples of conditional language in Scripture. Think of Is. 7:9: "If you will not believe, you will not be established." Think of Acts 16:31: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." This latter text not only shows that the covenant is conditional in its existence, but also shows how the children were included!

Thus, there is no substance to Engelsma's charge, nor to his Scripture proof. He cites Rom. 9:16 – a text which makes no direct reference either to children or to the covenant, but to God's sovereign work of election. Who can deny this? Pointing out conditions that exist in the covenant does not in any way detract from God's sovereign decree of election, see 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1.

The same holds for Engelsma's references to the Canons of Dort. He quotes I/9,10, but why does he ignore I,3,4 and 12 or II,5, where the means or conditions of the covenant are mentioned? Canons I,3 speaks about the preaching of the gospel in order to bring men to faith, I,4 speaks about the two-fold effect of this preaching: unbelief and faith. Canons II,5 says that the Lord sends the gospel wherever He wills and adds with the promise the *command* to repent and *believe* this gospel. Engelsma quotes III/IV,14, but why does he not read V,14 as well? Canons V,14 says that the use of means are included in God's sovereign work of grace. One cannot successfully argue a case by upholding only a part of a creed, and silently passing over the other parts. And here I have not even mentioned I,17, where *all* "the children of God-fearing parents" are explicitly included in the covenant.

2. In the second argument, Engelsma holds that we teach universal atonement as regards the children of believers. Frankly it is a mystery to me how this is even logically possible, let alone actually true. "Universal" means: "all men" and thus logically incorporates a category incongruous with "children of believers." There is little clarity in this way of speaking.

Aside from this strange terminology, – we also must reject the sense of Engelsma's argument. We do not teach that the children of believers are promised the covenant on the basis that Christ has washed them all in His blood. We say: God in Christ promises them that He will wash them in His blood from all their sins and adds with the promise His demand that the children turn from evil and believe His word, and that the parents instruct their children in these things. When children grow up not believing God's promises, it does not mean that Christ takes back what He first gave them. It means that His fists are spurned, and the covenant breaker incurs the wrath of God's covenant. God has thus instituted His covenant in order to stress how serious our covenant obligations are in His service.

3. Engelsma's final objection is that the Canadian Reformed view implies that the Word of God fails. For those who do not believe, God's promise does not hold true. But this, too, is a caricature of our standpoint. Faced with the unbelief

of many of Israel's sons, the apostle Paul takes pains to point out, "But it is not as though the Word of God had failed," Rom. 9:6. The unbelief of men can never nullify the grace of God. God's Word never returns empty but always accomplishes its purpose – effecting grace to one, and wrath to the other, all in accordance with His sovereign good pleasure, Isaiah 55:11. But the covenant promise remains the same for all children of believers.

Engelsma uses strong words against the Canadian Reformed Churches. Their teaching stands "in diametrical opposition to the teaching of Scripture" and "conflicts with cardinal doctrines of the Word of God." But when it comes to developing a case for these statements, one discovers that he has no sound arguments in his arsenal to support such strong allegations. On the one hand, he makes us say things we do not say, and on the other hand, he misreads our (and his own) confessions through the glasses of the typical Protestant Reformed interpretation that makes election dominate all other doctrines. Hence we are falsely accused of Arminianism.

Engelsma's view

We will now consider the view that Engelsma himself defends with regard to the children of the covenant. We have already noted that all along he has argued for their inclusion in the covenant. He has insisted on this position in opposition to the Baptists and the view of covenant held by the Netherlands Reformed Congregations and the Free Reformed Church. Here then is Engelsma's view:

"Although all our children are in the sphere of the covenant and therefore receive the sign of the covenant and are reared as covenant members, the covenant of God, the relationship of friendship in Jesus Christ, is established with the elect children only." (p. 342, May 1, 1990).

Here the truth of his position finally appears. The children of believers are *included* in the covenant, but actually they are also *excluded* from the covenant.

What is anyone to make of this reasoning? What does it mean to be included in the sphere of the covenant? Here Engelsma's language suddenly becomes vague. And there is a clear reason for this turn to the vague concept of the "sphere of the covenant." When one closes the door to the simple teaching of Scripture, one begins to reach for whatever might fit the occasion in order to salvage the situation.

Once Engelsma begins on this road there is no end. Whereas he began with denying presumptive regeneration, in the end he says: "Viewing their children as God's children, believers must approach them as elect children in teaching and discipline, even though there may indeed be reprobate and unregenerate children among them. Election determines the approach." (p. 414, July 1, 1990) What is this but presumptive regeneration? He even goes on to say that the Canons of Dort restrict the promise of the gospel and the sacraments to believers, (quoting III/IV,8) a statement which the article quoted does not make, and which flies in the face of the clear language of II,5. Ultimately we find Engelsma reading his view into the confessions, and hence misinterpreting their message.

What Scriptural references does Engelsma bring forward to support his view? He refers to God's words to Moses in Rom. 9:15: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." But as I have previously stated, this text does not deny for a moment the seriousness and the validity of God's covenant promise made to the children of all believers in the covenant. Engelsma reads this denial into the text. The focus of Romans 9 is on the fulfilment of the covenant promise through God's own


sovereign act, and it does not touch the validity (legal reliability) of the covenant promise made to all the offspring. Then, quoting Rom. 4:16, Engelsma says: The promise of God is sure to all the seed. But then he must have strange glasses on, for Rom. 4:16 says: "That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his (Abraham's) descendants – not only to the adherents of the law but also those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all." Paul stresses the *condition* of the covenant: the call to faith! And the requirement of faith as the way to salvation does not detract one iota from the certainty of God's promises!

The reasoning of prof. Engelsma is an unending circle, fraught with self-contradictions. First the children are included, then they are excluded. First there is no presumptive regeneration, then we must presume our children to be elect children. Where does this end? In effect, there is not much difference in the view on the position of children in the covenant between the Protestant Reformed and the Baptists and Netherlands Reformed Congregations that Engelsma is opposing. They each differ in degree, but not in essentials: they all do not *really* include all the children of believers in the covenant of grace.

The sad part of all of this is that the theory of the "sphere of the covenant" as propounded by Engelsma is foreign to the Scriptures. It is a "sphere of the covenant" theory much in the same vein as propounded by several church leaders opposing the simple view of Scripture upheld at the time of the

Liberation in 1944. And whereas Rev. Hoeksema took a good stand opposing the Points of Kalamazoo which made the doctrine of common grace binding in 1924, in 1950 all his gains were lost when he made a binding statement of his own excluding the view of the confessions defended by Schilder.¹ Engelsma is only perpetuating the same kind of "election" theology which refuses to entertain the Scriptural teaching of faith as the way or condition to salvation and the notion of God's wrath against covenant breakers.

In sum: we reject the allegations of prof. Engelsma that we are Arminian in our view of the covenant, and we reject his charges that we teach doctrines diametrically opposed to the Scriptures. We teach those confessional doctrines which are clearly maintained in the creeds and which he does not appear to notice: the covenant has conditions.

The crux of this debate is ultimately very practical. How do we view our children? How are we to approach them in teaching and instruction? The Lord demands a great sacrifice precisely because they are included in the covenant – a covenant in which our responsibility is never abrogated. Let no one hide the clear demand of the gospel behind a smoke screen of "sphere" theories, but simply do his duty in the place he is called. Then we will also see the rewards! 

¹For a description of these events see the appendix to R. Van Reest's book *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church*, written by T. Plantinga.

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

By G.Ph. van Popta

Divorce and remarriage

We received a letter with the following questions from a reader:

In our Canadian Reformed Churches it happens more and more that divorced people get remarried to a different partner. What biblical grounds are there that God is pleased with this? Is it okay when the divorce was due to adultery?

Let me say first of all that since I have no statistics on hand, I would not be able to confirm whether this is something which is happening "more and more" of late than of years past. However, it is true that it does happen. From time to time consistories must deal with the question of divorce and remarriage because of certain situations in their congregations.

In your letter, you ask only about remarriage of divorced people. I am sure that you would agree that in order to find out whether or not remarriage is ever allowed, we must first see whether or not divorce is ever permissible. And in

order to find out the answer to that, we must first remind ourselves of what marriage is.

Marriage is a divine institution. It is a gift of God. In Genesis 2:21,22 we read that after God had made the woman from one of the man's ribs, He brought the woman to the man. This beautiful account of the first wedding is followed by the divine charter of marriage (Genesis 2:24): "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."

Marriage is a bond which is closer than the bond between parents and children. A young man and a young woman leave their parents and cleave to one another in marriage. This "cleaving" is something like applying glue to a man and a woman and then joining them together. This implies permanence and inseparability. Marriage is a lifelong relationship. As far as breaking the marriage bond is concerned, we know what the

LORD God said in Malachi 2:16. The men of Israel were divorcing their wives. God said, "I hate divorce."

The first thing we must do is remind ourselves of the permanence and the indissolubility of marriage. Divorce is never a good solution to problems in marriage, no matter how severe the problem.

However, the fact remains, that divorce does occur. The Lord Jesus recognized that in Matthew 19. After reiterating that the marriage relationship may not be broken, He recognized that Moses allowed Israelites to divorce their wives. Divorce was tolerated. The fact that it was tolerated shows that is was not a good thing. You only tolerate something bad. We don't tolerate good things. We accept good things with thanksgiving. Moses, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote legislation (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) which tolerated and regulated the bad thing called "divorce."

The Lord Jesus then went on to say in Matthew 19:9, "Whoever divorces his

wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery." The Lord absolutely forbade divorce and remarriage, except in one case: if one partner is sexually unfaithful to his/her spouse, the "innocent" spouse *may* seek a divorce. The "innocent" spouse *may* also remarry. The experts in Greek grammar tell me that both the divorce and the remarriage are covered by the exception spoken of by the Lord.

The "innocent" spouse is not required to seek a divorce. In fact, it should be seen as the last and most terrible option. All possible avenues of reconciliation and of calling the offending spouse to repentance must first be travelled. It should never be seized as a convenient way out of a lousy marriage. and if the offending spouse repents, asking the Lord for his/her spouse for forgiveness, divorce is ruled out. Forgiveness and reconciliation is the first and best option. Let us not forget how often God forgives us and accepts us back after we have been unfaithful to Him.

However, if the offending spouse persists in the sin of unchastity or refuses to repent and be reconciled to his/her spouse, then the "innocent" spouse may choose the terrible option of divorce. The "innocent" spouse may also remarry although it may be better to remain single.

I realize that, in the churches, there are different understandings of the words of the Lord Jesus regarding divorce and remarriage. I give my understanding which is based on the fact that the exceptive clause ("except for unchastity") of Matthew 19:9 refers to both "whoever divorces his wife" as well as "and marries another."

The other Scripture we must look at is 1 Corinthians 7. From 1 Corinthians 7:1 we know that the church at Corinth wrote a letter to Paul asking him many questions, also regarding marriage. In verse 10 and 11 Paul says that husbands and wives may not divorce each other. But if they do, there are, for them, only two options: remain single or be reconciled. In these verses Paul is speaking about a man and woman who are both members of the church. Divorce is not an option; however, if they do choose this non-option as a solution to their problems, they would remain single. And, of course, it would be better for them to be reconciled.

In 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, the apostle addressed the situation where one spouse is a believer and the other an unbeliever. Since the church at Corinth was made up of recent converts, one could well imagine that there would be numerous cases in which one spouse became a Christian while one remained heathen. Paul is not speaking here of a believer marrying an unbeliever. That is

never allowed. He is speaking here of a couple who married while they were both heathen, and one of them consequently coming to the Christian faith. The believing spouse, in such situations, may not seek a divorce. However, if the unbelieving spouse insists upon a divorce, the believer is to grant it. Says Paul, "...in such a case the brother or sister is not bound."

In my understanding, the believer may, also in this situation, marry someone else (i.e., a fellow believer). I base that on two considerations: (1) When Paul spoke about the divorce of two believers, he forbade remarriage. He did not expressly forbid it of a believer who is divorced by an unbeliever. Admittedly, this is an argument from silence, but it does carry some weight. (2) The expression "is not bound" suggest the idea of being entirely free of that marriage, hence, free to remarry as well. A similar word is used in 1 Corinthians 7:39 when Paul says that a wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives but that she is free to marry if he dies. If the wife "is not bound" and may remarry in the case of the death of her husband, it would seem that a believer who "is not bound" when the unbelieving spouse divorces him/her may also remarry.

Summing up I would repeat that divorce is never a good option. It is always a bad solution to a bad situation. Reconciliation is the goal. Bringing unbelievers and sinners to repentance is

the goal, also in bad marriages. We must place all the emphasis on the permanence of the marriage bond.

However, the fact remains that divorce does happen. In my understanding of the scriptural data, there is only one situation in which a believer *may* sue for a divorce: when his/her spouse is/has been sexually unfaithful and refuses to repent and be reconciled. And, in my understanding, remarriage is only permissible for: (1) the "innocent" spouse who divorced his/her first spouse because of that spouse's sexual unfaithfulness and who has, fruitlessly, pursued all avenues of reconciliation; (2) a believer who was divorced by his/her unbelieving spouse after the former spouse converted to the Christian religion.

What is the message we must give to young people of the church who live in an age where divorce is considered normal? The message is that marriage, a beautiful institution and gift of God, is a permanent bond by means of which two children of God are glued together. They leave their parental homes, cleave together, and weave their lives into each other's (the "leave, cleave, weave" principle). And when difficulties come, and if one partner is unfaithful, pursue reconciliation! Call to repentance! Repent if you are the offending partner! For God hates divorce. He loves a godly marriage which reflects the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. C

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Deputies visit Scotland and Holland

At a meeting held early in 1990 the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) delegated the Revs. Cl. Stam and J. Visscher to visit the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN). The latter churches were about to convene a General Synod in Leeuwarden and the Committee was of the opinion that representatives from the Canadian Reformed Churches should be in evidence. With regard to the FCS Synod 1986 and 1989 had given the CRCA a mandate to investigate these churches with a view to possibly entering into a sister church relationship with them.

Seeing that these trips have to be booked well in advance, the Deputies decided to make reservations for two weeks in the month of September. All was in place for a planned departure, when we were informed that Synod Leeuwarden had closed at the end of June. No one expected that! Dutch Synods have a long history of meeting for months, even from one year to the next. What to do now? After due consideration it was decided to proceed with the trip in any case. Besides, it is sometimes more beneficial to deal with synodical decisions, than with proposals and reports to synod.

Here then follows the reports of the meetings which were held with the deputies both in Scotland and in Holland:

Report of the visits with the deputies and ministers of the Free Church of Scotland on September 14 and 17, 1990 in Edinburgh and Glasgow

The Canadian Deputies, Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. Cl. Stam, met with some of the members of the Free Church of Scotland Committee on Assembly Arrangements and Ecumenical Relations, together with the ministers serving in the Glasgow and Edinburgh area.

On Friday, September 14, 1990, we meet in Edinburgh at the premises of the Free Church College. Present for the FCS: Prof. A.C. Boyd, Rev. K.W.R. Cameron (past Moderator 1989-90), Rev. A. Gollan (Moderator 1990-91),



Left to right: Rev. J. de Gelder, Mr. D.J. van Wijnen, Dr. J. Visscher, Rev. H. van Veen, Rev. A. de Jager, Rev. Cl. Stam

Rev. D. Macleod, Elder A. MacDonald, Rev. John J. Murray.

On Monday, Sept. 17, 1990, we meet in Glasgow at the premises of the St. Vincent Street Free Church. Present for the FCS: Rev. R.C. Christie (new Editor of *The Monthly Record*), Rev. J. Gillies, Rev. J.J. Harding, Rev. D. Macleod, Rev. R.J. McKay.

In both of these meetings the discussions dealt with the following matters:

Background

The Canadian Deputies were given the opportunity to say something about the history and background of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CRC). Mention was made of our roots in the Netherlands and the struggles that our churches had faced during the last centuries. In this regard special attention was paid to the Liberation of 1942-44 and to its repercussions. The immigration experience was also highlighted and certain aspects of our relatively brief history in North America were related.

With respect to the ecumenical relations of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Deputies pointed out that until recently our churches had maintained relations only with churches in Australia, the Netherlands and South Africa. All of these churches share the same history, background, creedal standards and

church government. They have a common mother and a common origin in terms of continental Europe.

These relationships, however, should not give the impression that the Canadian Reformed Churches have not been busy elsewhere. Mention was made of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in the United States with whom we have a temporary relationship called "ecclesiastical contact" and with whom discussions are continuing in order to come, if possible, to sister church relations. Mention was also made of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) with whom we have had contact in the past which resulted in some progress but to whom we addressed several appeals when it became clear that they were not willing to sever ties with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN-Synodical) and their liberalizing influences. Finally, we reminded them that our membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) also underlined our true ecumenical commitment.

Relations with the OPC

In light of the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches have for some years already been busy with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and seeing that it is the only church of Presbyterian

persuasion that we have had intense contact with, we decided as Canadian Deputies to bring the members of the FCS up to date on the nature and state of these discussions. In particular we dealt with what have become known as the "divergencies" between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards, between the polity of Dordt and Westminster.

We fully realize that while there are similarities between the FCS and the OPC, there are also differences that need to be noted and respected. And while it can be argued that we did not have a mandate from Synod 1986 to 1989 to discuss these matters, we were of the opinion that failure to do so may well deprive the FCS of certain needed insights in terms of their evaluation of us and where we stand with respect to their confessions and church government.

They listened sympathetically and requested us to send them copies of the letter which our Contact Committee sent to the OPC. We promised to do so in due time.

It may be worthy of note that one of the Scottish brothers asked, "Why do you speak of us as Presbyterian and yourself as Reformed; whereas, we consider ourselves to be Reformed as well." We were a little taken aback by this question and explained that no offense was intended, but that it had become, rightly or wrongly, a way of speaking and easy identification in our circles. It became clear that the FCS considers itself to be REformed in doctrine and Presbyterian in policy. (Can the same not be said of us?)

Rules for correspondence

From reading the Reports of the Deputies for Relations With Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN-Liberated), as well as from their Acts of Synod, we were aware that certain difficulties had arisen around the Rules of Correspondence which the RCN has adopted. Our reading of the Principal ACTS of the 1989 General Assembly of the FCS confirmed this. It states there in the Report of the Committee on Assembly Arrangements and Ecumenical Relations, "It was agreed to inform the Dutch Committee that whilst the Free Church of Scotland were happy with the relationship presently subsisting between the two Churches and offered no objection in principle to most of the rules for sister-relations listed they were not convinced of the necessity or appropriateness of detailed regulations. Nor indeed did they appreciate the distinction between sisterly and brotherly relations which ap-

pears somewhat artificial. In general therefore the Free Church feel that the exchange of delegates who bring greetings and are given the courtesy of the floor for that purpose, meets the needs of the case." (R p.5)

As a result of the above, the Canadian Deputies noted that there were some misunderstandings that needed to be removed, as in the case of the distinction between brotherly and sisterly relations. Such a distinction does not exist. At the same time we pointed out there is obviously a difference in the way that certain "Reformed" churches and certain "Presbyterian" churches exercise inter-church relations. The former have adopted a more systematic and formal approach with clearly defined rules and procedures. The latter have taken a less comprehensive and more informal approach which includes very little in the way of set regulations.

We, for our part, read our rules and explained in detail and in practical terms how they function. We also asked them to study these rules and to relay to us their reactions. We added that certain parts are in need of streamlining and clarification and that our Committee would be making recommendations to the next General Synod of the CRC in 1992 along those lines. (This in consultation with our sister churches.)

In the ensuing discussion it became clear that the FCS is not opposed in principle to our rules. Their concerns are of a more practical nature in that they are not used to such an approach as ours and wonder how it really functions. At the same time some reservations have also been expressed in FCS circles about their approach to other churches. Their questions about the Dutch rules should also be viewed from the fact that no common language exists between the Netherlands and Scotland. Of course, it is true that English is a language which is taught in the Netherlands and thus accessible to many; however,

the same can not be said of the Dutch language. Members of the FCS can not read Dutch books, periodicals or Acts. Should a sister church relationship come into being it would enable some Dutch ministers to preach in Scotland; however, it is doubtful whether any Scottish minister would be able to preach in the Netherlands. Language is thus an obstacle to a fully functioning relationship. Such a problem, however, does not exist between the CRC and the FCS.

As far as the current relationships which the FCS maintains, they have ties which vary. The Free Church congregations in North America are considered a part of the FCS. Close relations are maintained with "daughter churches" and "mission churches" in Australia, India, Ireland, Peru and South Africa, although without prescribed rules. Whenever a General Assembly meets greetings are sent to and received from various churches. The following are mentioned in the ACTS of 1989 and 1990: the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk of the Netherlands, the Free Church in Southern Africa, the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands (Liberated), the Gereformeerde Kerk in South Africa, Nederduitse Church of Eastern Australia, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Reformed Churches in New Zealand, the Reformed Church of Australia. For our part a lot can be read into the above list of churches; however, it appears that the FCS does not do so. In an informal way they recognize these churches as being faithful and see no problems in exchanging greetings with them. More than that is often not involved.

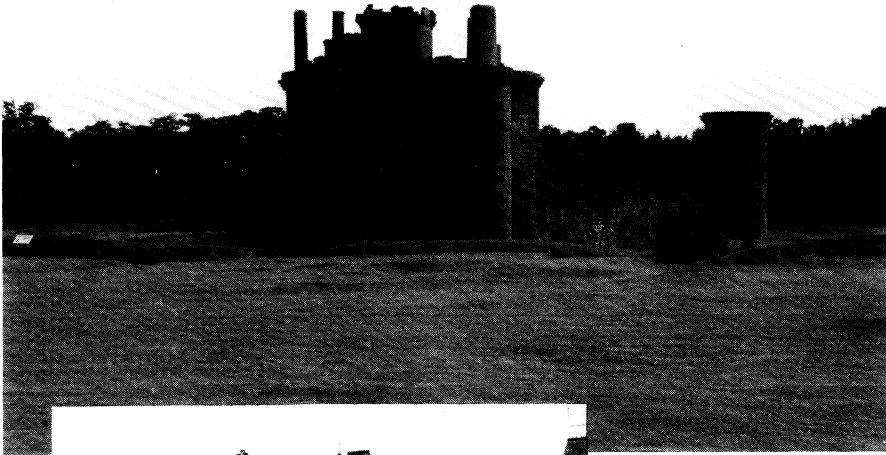
Free Church congregations in Canada

As part of our task, the Canadian Deputies also discussed with the FCS representatives the matter of the FCS congregations in North America. Up until recently there were the following congregations: Vancouver, B.C. (1), Toronto, ON (1), Prince Edward Island (9), Livonia, MI, U.S.A. (1) and a preaching station in Edmonton, AB. With the exception of the Toronto congregation we were informed that most of these churches were very small and their membership was quite elderly. (Since then the Vancouver congregation has dissolved) At present there are FCS ministers in P.E.I. (3) and in Toronto (1).

We pointed out to the FCS that should we enter into a sister church relationship with them in the future that this would have a bearing on the relationship in Canada between our local churches and theirs. It was felt that then

OUR COVER

"Footprints"
Fergus, ON



*Caerlaverock Castle in
Dumfries and Galloway*



*Free Church College
— Edinburgh*

some form of mutual recognition and cooperation could be worked out and implemented. It was pointed out to the FCS that some in the CRC were of the opinion that a sister church relations calls for an immediate merger between their churches and ours; however, we informed them that this would be a matter for Synod to decide and that as Deputies we would be more in favour of a process whereby the bonds between our respective local churches would grow and mature. One must be realistic enough to realize that it is not an easy matter to bring together immigrant churches from two different cultures and with two different ecclesiastical traditions. This requires careful planning and sensitive implementation.

Preaching

Another matter that came up in our discussions had to do with preaching

and access to the pulpit. As Canadian Deputies we pointed out to the FCS brethren that in our Reformed churches there has always been a tradition which says that access to the pulpit depends on the existence of a sister church relationship. The fact that FCS ministers were not invited to preach in the CRC during the time of the last meeting of the ICRC should not be interpreted as a negative verdict on the FCS. It is simply a matter of our abiding by the rules and procedures that we have always had.

The Rev. John Gillies, who was present and had also represented the FCS at the ICRC, stated that such a policy on the part of the CRC was perfectly understandable and should cause no offense. The fact that criticism was voiced about this in *The Monthly Record* should not be interpreted as being the sentiment of the FCS.

As far as the FCS is concerned, pulpit access does not always take place within the context of a formalized relationship. Naturally ministers of "daughter churches" in other parts of the world are readily accepted. As for ministers from other churches, that seems to be more a matter of personal recommendation and invitation. If the FCS comes into contact with a faithful Reformed church and has confidence in the orthodoxy of its ministers, they may well be invited to preach.

On occasion the FCS sessions will also invite ministers who may be serving in churches such as the liberal Church of Scotland or in a Reformed Baptist congregation. In each of those cases the minister will only be invited if he is known to be Reformed in his views, as well as sensitive to the distinctives of the FCS. (As Deputies we later asked a well-known FCS elder what would happen if a Reformed Baptist minister used an FCS pulpit to attack infant baptism? His answer was a blunt, "He would never be asked again!")

Needless to say this all sounded strange to our ears; however, we were repeatedly assured that only Reformed preaching is tolerated on their pulpits.

The Lord's Supper

With respect to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the Canadian Deputies were informed about FCS practices. In most local FCS congregations the Lord's Supper is celebrated at least twice a year. This is less frequent than in the CRC; however, it should be understood that when the Supper is celebrated it often involves members from the neighbouring FCS churches. The result is that many members may celebrate it at least six times a year.

The preparations for each local celebration are rather extensive. Preparatory services are often held Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening before the actual celebration which takes place on the Sunday. This is to insure as much as is humanely possible that the members do not eat and drink condemnation to themselves.

As far as admittance to the Lord Supper is concerned, a very strict procedure is followed in the FCS churches. In some places tokens are still being used. (As a matter of fact the custodian of the Free Church College showed us a whole cabinet filled with all sorts of different Lord's Supper tokens.) Every one who is a member of the church in good standing receives from the elders a token which admits him or her to the sacrament. In this way supervision can be carefully exercised.

As for guests at the Lord's table from other churches, that does not seem to happen very often. One must understand that in Scotland there is no large, mobile evangelical community visiting here and there. Most congregations do not see a large influx of visitors, and in terms of the general population the FCS is often mocked, derided and isolated. In short, there is no stipulated policy with respect to visitors, although all are subject to the fencing of the table by means of the series of preparatory services held before the Supper. The primary focus remains on the members of the local church who must show by their confession and walk of life that they can partake in a believing and conscientious manner.

In conclusion

As Canadian Deputies we may say that we were very warmly received by the FCS. At all times the brothers were frank and open in their conversations with us. We came away from the meetings with the impression that here is a Church which is faithful to the Lord and which seeks to serve Him in all things. That certain practices are different from what we are used to can not be doubted, but we are of the opinion that those differences do not hinder us from recognizing the FCs and from recommending to the CRCA as a whole that some of the points dealt with in our report be finalized in writing with the FCs in order that definite proposals can be presented to Synod in due time.

On behalf of the Deputies,
Cl. Stam
J. Visscher

Report of the visit with the Dutch Deputies (BBK) on September 20, 1990, at Zwolle, the Netherlands.

The Canadian Deputies, Dr. J. Visscher and Rev. Cl. Stam, met with the section III (ICRC and Anglo-Saxon countries) of the Dutch Deputies for contact with foreign churches (BBK). The Dutch were represented by Rev. A. de Jager (formerly of Neerlandia), Rev. J. de Gelder, Drs. H. van Veen, and br. D.J. van Wijnen.

The meeting was opened in a proper Christian fashion by the chairman, Rev. J. de Gelder. All members of the meeting were heartily welcomed. An agenda for the meeting was established.

Canadian concerns

The Canadian Deputies received the opportunity to present and explain the concerns raised by the General Synods of Smithville (1980), Cloverdale (1983), Burlington-West (1986) and Win-

nipeg (1989) concerning *consultation and coordination* with respect to contacts and relationships with "third parties." Emphasis was placed on the need to come to some mutually acceptable "common approach" (see Acts, Burlington-West, Art. 177, D).

The Canadian Deputies expressed disappointment that the Dutch churches had unilaterally proceeded with various relations and that a widening gap was developing between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Gereformeerde kerken (Liberated) in this respect.

The Dutch Deputies showed understanding for the Canadian concerns. They emphasized that it is their striving to have prior consultation as much as possible, especially when it comes to contacts with English-speaking churches in the United Kingdom and in the United States. They always try to keep the Canadian churches duly informed and will continue to do so.

Independent federations

At the same time, however, the Dutch Deputies stressed that it is not always possible and feasible to come to a simultaneous coordination of these contacts and relations with others. The churches have their own responsibility in these matters as independent federations.

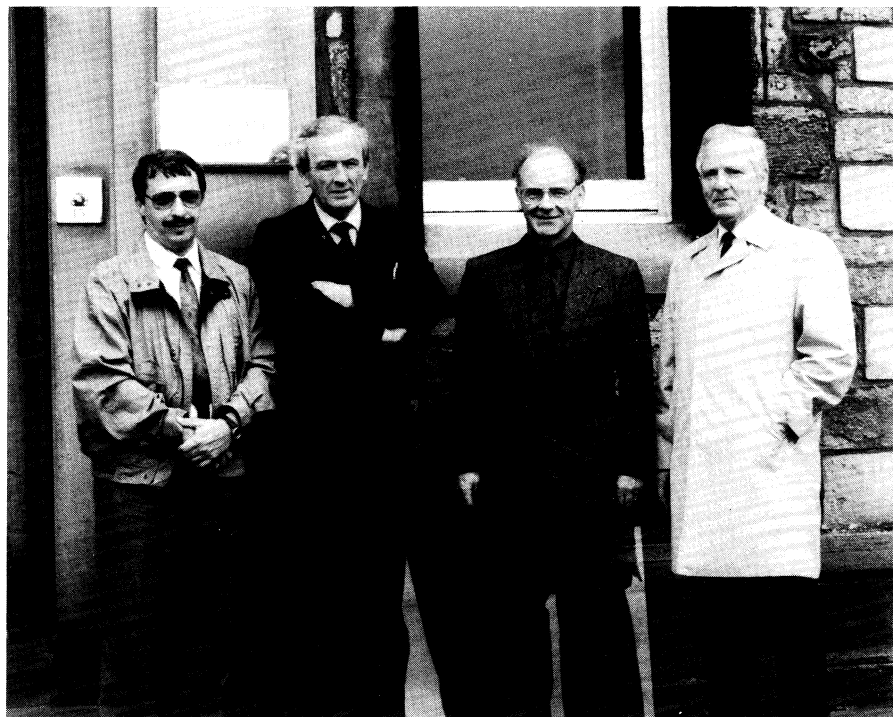
This was illustrated by two examples. The Dutch Deputies had informed the Canadian Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad well in advance of their intent to proceed with recogniz-

ing the Free Church of Scotland, but did not see it as necessary to wait for the Canadian Churches to take the same steps. The Free Church of Scotland was seen by the Dutch sister churches more as "an European affair." The Dutch Deputies admitted that it had somewhat been overlooked that there are also congregations of the Free Church of Scotland in Canada.

The Dutch sister churches at their Synod of Leeuwarden also felt compelled to enter into a sister church relationship with the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) because of the great need to support this church in its mission work in Zaire, Africa. Time is of the essence for immediate help and support when it is urgently required. Therefore "coordination" of the contacts in this regard and the resulting sister church relationship was not possible. The developments with respect to the RCUS did indeed go quicker than initially expected.

The Dutch Deputies expressed their willingness to strive for coordination of contacts, but also urged the Canadian Reformed Churches to show diligence and resoluteness in these contacts. In the changing ecumenical climate, it was said, we cannot fall behind.

The Canadian Deputies feel that they have to the best of their ability presented the concerns as summarized by the Synod of Winnipeg (1989, Acts, page 74). We are grateful to report that the Dutch Deputies are well aware of our concerns and will strive all the more for



Left to right: Rev. Cl. Stam, Mr. Bill Anderson, Principal A.C. Boyd, Mr. A. MacDonald

coordination and consultation as much as possible. This will be facilitated if the churches adopt a common set of rules for "correspondence," as suggested by the recent Synod of Leeuwarden.

Rules for correspondence

Regarding the rules for correspondence, it was noted that the Synod of Leeuwarden, had decided to maintain only *one* ecclesiastical relationship with churches abroad (sister church relationship). This means that the "temporary contact relationship" is no longer in function. This is also in accordance with the desire of the Canadian Reformed Churches (*Acts*, Cloverdale, Art. 110, C and D).

The new Dutch rules were read and discussed. These rules are as follows:

RULES FOR ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING SISTER CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD.

(translation Cl. Stam)

1. Content of the sister church relationship
According to the Reformed confession, a sister church relationship with foreign churches exists in the mutual recognition of each other as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ with a corresponding exercising of ecclesiastical fellowship.
2. The establishing of sister church relationships

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands will enter into a sister church relationship with foreign churches only after it has been ascertained, particularly by means of Deputies, that such churches have not only officially recognized the Reformed confession of the Word of God but also actually maintain it in their ecclesiastical practice of doctrine, worship, church order and liturgy.

The following must be taken into account:

- 2.1. The Lord Jesus Christ gathers His Church from out of various nations, each of which are determined by their geographical location, history, and culture, so that foreign churches may not be judged with respect to differences in non-essential points in the manner of confession, liturgy, church order, and practice.
- 2.2. In case of relations with "third parties," it must be carefully investigated what these relations involve for the church in question, in order to determine the value, the sense, and the best possible procedure of entering into a sister church relationship and/or the exercising of an ecclesiastical relationship with such a church.
- 2.3. It is possible that in certain countries more than one ecclesiastical federation may exist which ought to be recognized as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the

possibility of relations with more than one ecclesiastical federation in the same country cannot in itself be ruled out.

Because of Christ's command for unity, however, there may be no resignation towards such a situation of "dual relations," and it ought to remain a topic of discussion.

3. Rules for the exercising of the sister church relationship.

The sister church relationship entered into with a church abroad shall be exercised according to the following rules, with the goal that as Reformed churches we together remain faithful to the confession of God's Word, that we assist one another, and that we encourage and exhort one another to bear witnesses in this world in word and deed of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To ensure this, the following rules shall apply as minimum:

- 3.1. The churches shall see to each other that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy.
- 3.2. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts or Minutes and, otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible, in translation).
- 3.3. The churches shall inform each other concerning the entering into relations with third parties.
- 3.4. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation.
- 3.5. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches.
In exercising these relations, the churches shall strive to implement also the following:
- 3.6. In case of changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms, which are of a material confessional nature, the sister churches shall be especially informed of this intent, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.
- 3.7. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest as-



A gracht in Amsterdam

semblies and invite them to sit as advisors, as much as this is possible.

Ground:

The nature of the sister church relationship requires that rules for inter-church relations be established and maintained.

The Canadian Deputies pass on the following information as well. Synod Leeuwarden instructed its Deputies "to send to the sister churches with whom a sister church relation already exists the newly formulated "Rules For Sister Church Relations" – where necessary in English translation – with the request that the sister churches agree to continue the sister church relationship on the basis of the newly formulated rules."

Some discussion followed on the proper English wording of the new Dutch rules. The Canadian Deputies offered their assistance. The Canadian Deputies will present these new rules for discussion to the Canadian Contact Committee and the forthcoming Synod Lincoln 1992.

Regarding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

The Dutch Deputies inquired about the document "Biblical Principles concerning the Unity of the Church" as published by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. They asked: what is the position of the Canadian Reformed Churches with respect to this document?

The Canadian Deputies responded that this document has been well-received in the Canadian churches and has been included as an Appendix to the Acts of Synod Winnipeg 1989. It will function further in the discussions with the OPC. The Deputies referred the Dutch Deputies on this point to the Committee for Contact with the OPC to give a more accurate update on the current situation.

The Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (OCRC)

The Dutch Deputies requested some information on the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church. The Canadian Deputies gave some information, mentioning that there are some local contacts with OCRC congregations, but none with the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad.

The Canadian Deputies suggested that the situation with the OCRC is still too uncertain to take concerted action. The Dutch Deputies expressed their interest in the developments and asked to be kept up to date in this matter.

Different mandate

At this point in the discussion it was noted that the Dutch Deputies have a dif-



Left to right: Mr. D. Rankin, Rev. Cl. Stam, Mr. B. Norton

ferent synodical mandate than the Canadian Deputies. The Dutch Deputies have been appointed to *seek and initiate* contact with other churches, while the Canadian Deputies must wait with the making of any contacts until a *specific mandate* has been received from General Synod. This explains why the Dutch Deputies can proceed more independently and swiftly than their Canadian counterparts.

The advantages and drawbacks of these different mandates were briefly discussed. The Canadian Deputies expressed as their concern that the Dutch approach does not sufficiently recognize the fact that the *churches* and not *committees* are to determine the agenda of the major assemblies. Such an approach can easily lead to excess. The Dutch Deputies agreed that careful discretion is required in this matter.

Requests for financial support

The Dutch Deputies mentioned that the Dutch churches had received various requests support from individual Canadian churches for support to build churches or purchase parsonages. They wondered if such requests should not be accompanied by a classical recommendation and a letter from the (Canadian) Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad stating that the request is bona fide.

The Canadian Deputies agreed with this and promise to present this matter in their report to the next General Synod.

International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

The Deputies briefly discussed a few matters concerning the ICRC. It was

noted that the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk would most likely ask to be admitted to the ICRC. The question has been asked by the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk if the ICRC has a future of "cooperation" or "confrontation" between "Reformed" and "Presbyterian" churches.

The Canadian Deputies responded that the admission of churches to the ICRC is not so much a matter of the member churches individually but of the Conference itself. Each member church must determine later whether the admission of new churches was done properly on good grounds. The Dutch Deputies agreed with this approach.

Conclusion

The meeting was conducted in an open and brotherly manner. It appears that the Dutch and Canadian churches are aware of each other's concerns and that there is a great desire to work together in the matter of international ecclesiastical relations.

At the same time it became clear that each federation lives in a different situation and must respond to the needs and opportunities, as presented, in a responsible manner as best seems feasible and necessary. The Deputies pledge to continue close consultation in the hope that the coordination of contacts will become more and more a reality.

Rev. Cl. Stam led in closing the meeting with thanksgiving to the Lord.

On behalf of the Deputies,
Cl. Stam
J. Visscher



First National Principal's Convention

November 15,16, 1990 – Smithville, ON

By A. Kingma



Front row (l to r): T.M.P. Vanderven, L. Hoogerdijk, Mrs. C. van Halen-Faber, Miss J. Kingma, A. Gunnink, P. Witten. Back row (l to r): A. Kingma, F.C. Ludwig, A. Nap, A. Van Overbeeke, R. Van Delft, J.G. Van Dooren, H.J. Nobel, J. Harthoorn, P.H. Torenvliet, K. Kort, S.F. Nap, E. Vanderboom. Missing: J. Roukema, J. Scholtens, H. VanBeelen, D. VanDyk

The two-day Convention began cheerfully. Expectations were high. Principals from all over Canada and Michigan met with cheery and hearty greetings. Old friends reacquainted. Names now became a reality for all. Only one principal, Mr. J. Roukema (Langley), was absent (which all present regretted sincerely).

After acquainting over coffee, Mr. Al-lard Gunnink called the meeting to order. He introduced the convention with a devotional speech entitled "Plastic or Blooming Flowers." He noted how blessed we were to be able to set up

school, obtain larger facilities, and even to move from old buildings to new buildings. He stressed that these schools should not be plastic flowers which look beautiful from a distance, but that they should be blooming flowers, flowers that are real and even more beautiful when examined closely. Our Reformed education should shine through in what we are doing. We need to constantly translate what we believe and put that into practice. The Reformed teacher and the Reformed school must continually "be on fire" for our Lord.

The floor was given to Mr. H. Van-Dooren, principal of Guido de Bres, to introduce our main speaker and to moderate the morning's discussion. Mr. VanDooren paused for just a moment to observe his surroundings. He observed a ceiling fan circling overhead, a symbol of "things to come." He observed that he was sitting at the dark side of the table and that the sun was ready to alight on our speaker, Mr. VanderVen and that therefore Mr. VanderVen should have the floor. Mr. VanderVen, whose prepared paper we had all studied, spoke on "The Principal: the Learner and Leader." He introduced his paper by highlighting seven statements (see insert). The principal should be a visionary, a principal-teacher who obtains wisdom from God's Word and who shares this wisdom with parents, boards, teachers and students. He should be well-informed of the present day's philosophies and practices in teaching and should effectively lead "his" school through them.

Being a good principal himself, Mr. VanderVen did not leave the principals without things to do. He gave them the mandate to understand the schools curriculum and to provide focus and direction for its implementation. Principals should have a keen understanding of the nature of teaching. He should be a student of educational philosophy and articulate educational goals for the school. He should be a keen student of people, so that he can "guide, stimulate, persuade, and counsel, etc."

After listening to Mr. VanderVen's introduction, we listened to Mr. Hoogerdijk's (Coaldale) and Mr. P.H. Torenvliet's (Yarrow) responses to the speech. Both responses concurred with and complemented Mr. VanderVen's paper. A point was made that "knowledge is not neutral." Our method of presenting knowledge must be scriptural. Methods presented by secular educators may give us

useful information. We must study whether whole language, cooperative learning, peer teaching, collaborative learning, etc. are methods that Christian educators may use. Methodologies and teaching strategies, including their rationale and philosophies, should be studied and tested.

In the general discussion which followed, some simple issues which face principals like "no time, isolation, no formal principal training" were set aside so that the discussion could focus on what principals should be doing. Two main topics around which the discussion focused were: 1. the role of the principal in our Reformed schools and 2. the need for the development of a Reformed pedagogy and rationale. Statements like the following were made:

1. Be a spiritual leader. Know what Reformed education is and be able to articulate it in every situation against other philosophies, in evaluating teachers, etc.
2. We should not use the term "spiritual" leaders, because a teacher is not a spiritual leader.
3. We should not use the eclectic (borrowing) approach only, instead, we should examine: What are we doing in our classroom, what are we doing in our in-services, in CARE, etc.
4. Our schools are now 25 years old. We have come to the end of a period of consolidation and are embarking on a period of growth. We are doing God's business. God uses us as His tools. He gives us the rules for our task....God will bless our endeavours despite how "poorly" we do...as long as we begin with the fear of the Lord.

In the afternoon session, the relationships between private schools and provincial governments were discussed. Representatives from each province spoke a few words regarding their own situations. It was recognized that the situation between the Canadian Reformed Schools and the government is the best in B.C. and the worst in Ontario. British Columbia has received an independent school's act which upholds the existence of independent schools in that province and ensures good relations between them and their government. The poor relationship in Ontario is mainly due to a strong anti-independent school attitude on the part of the Ontario Ministry of

Education. We hope and pray that our schools in Ontario may at least be recognized as "real" schools that have the right to exist beside public and/or separate schools.

Friday morning promised to be another busy and balmy day. We began this day with a speech by Mr. L. Jagt, from Burlington, on "Management." He began with a major complement: He explained that the conference was a good decision. In business terms, it would be known as "pooling the resources." He unknowingly also complemented our Thursday's discussion by stating that the strategy and the philosophy of the school (Reformed education) should be clearly articulated. The objectives for the Board, Education Committee, principal and for the teacher should be clearly stated as well. Speaking of the task of the principal,

Mr. Jagt mentioned that principals should always begin from the premise that they are teachers, and then administrators. Principals should have an understanding of the whole and of the parts, be able to effect change where needed. They should be good leaders who recognize individual talent using skills of personnel for the "corporate" benefit. Principals should search for progress, check for "empire builders" and above all, keep visionary "goals" in mind....

The last part dealt with principals as motivators. Besides motivating themselves, they must "encourage" and "hand hold"; they must help boards and be helped by them; they must communicate to all groups or individuals involved; and they must market Reformed education.

Mr. Jagt's speech sparked off a healthy discussion. Several comments

Introductory Remarks

The Principal: Learner and Leader

National Conference of Principals of Canadian Reformed Schools
November 15, 1990, Smithville, ON

I believe

- that we truly have a good thing going: Reformed education is a worthy and worthwhile enterprise since it is a mandate by our God and Father and therefore has eternal value. Reformed educators can and must be scripturally optimistic. *God is our refuge and strength, a well proved help in trouble* (Psalm 46:1); *LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations...from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God* (Psalm 90:1,2).
- that we need to rethink and reshape *our vision of Reformed education*. The phrase covenantal education might have lost its meaning and therefore its ability to inspire the practice of our educational endeavours as illustrated by the lack of genuine Reformed pedagogical thought.
- that we need to develop ongoing opportunities for *intense study* of the nature and character of Reformed education, and the implications for classroom practice and school management.
- that we *need each other* as members of a school team and as members of the wider school system to challenge, stimulate, encourage, assist, admonish each other.
- that we need to (re)articulate carefully the notion of a *parental school* (as distinct from the home-school relationship) in terms of educational aims, school organization, school values and expectations, and school curriculum.
- that we need to develop and promote *high standards and expectations* for the Reformed teaching profession, recognizing our responsibility to translate the principles of Reformed education into the daily practice of Reformed classrooms.
- that the *we* in these propositions refers in the first place to all the principals of Reformed schools. We are called to lead the development and promotion of truly Reformed educational thought and practice, that is, to help provide the children of God's covenant with the best education we can offer – pro-actively!

See my paper *THE PRINCIPAL: LEARNER AND LEADER*.

Tony VanderVen,

November 15, 1990

were made regarding the idea of marketing Reformed education. Principals were encouraged to explain to their memberships not only the necessity of Reformed education but also what Reformed education is. Why? It seems that the necessity for Reformed education is not really understood and believed or accepted "in childlike faith" anymore. A commitment for Reformed education needs to be strengthened by a knowledge and understanding of it. It is the task of educators to help the Reformed communities in this serious matter.

After this speech, we dealt with a proposal of OPA (Ontario Principal Association) re: hiring practices of teachers. Much was said about this topic. The discussion ended with a general consensus among the principals: the present practices do stand a good review by each school. We cannot do too much about advertising, but we could ask each school board not to hire before a given date in the spring (eg. April 1). In this way, all teachers have equal opportunity to put in applications in several areas and all schools have equal share in obtaining applications from teachers. Other reasons were stated as well. Yet being only a principal's *conference*, the conference could not do much more than ask each principal to go back to their boards and review this whole matter.

The Ladies Aid of Smithville did an excellent, super and fantastic job of taking care of our physical needs. All four food groups were always on the table. Lasagna was served for lunch along with a salad, desert and a choice of juice and/or milk. After this delicious lunch, Mr. W.F. Horseman and Mr. A. Witten (Teacher's College) presented a paper entitled *Reformed Schools Need Reformed Teachers.* The issue dealt with: Are we training teachers adequately? Is our present system at the Teacher's College fulfilling the need for Reformed teachers? Are the teachers both trained in understanding Reformed methods of teaching and in knowing the academics needed for teaching? Is the College providing enough assistance for schools by means of in-service training? Why are we, then, not receiving full support, especially from schools and people in Ontario? Allow me to lift a paragraph out of the paper:

Reformed covenantal education needs the cooperation of all of us in prayerful commitment to our God-given task. We need to work ever more closely together as a system of Reformed schools and Reformed

teachers. We hope that this first National Principal's Conference is a giant step forward on this road to cooperation, and that it will show genuine leadership regarding the preservice and inservice training of teachers for our schools. Indeed, we should not shrink away from the need to evaluate and assess current practices and thought, and of the effectiveness of our schools and college. Also for Reformed education the statement holds true that being Reformed means active and ongoing reformation.

General Business was the last item on the agenda. It was agreed that another conference should be held in two years in B.C. Principals were asked to spell out their thoughts and ideas in the CRTA magazine, a means of communication that should not die out.

Mr. C. Nap (Cloverdale) led us in closing devotions. By means of Eccl. 7, and by connecting that with the beginning of Psalm 139, Mr. Nap emphasized that there are "small and big satisfactions" in the service of the Lord: many little, every day things should make us thankful to Him. Not only the evil, but also the good will "come into judgment." All the things we do will be rewarded by our heavenly Father.

Mr. K. Kort (London) ably accompanied us in praising our heavenly Father by singing Hymn 38:1-4.

I hope that the fruits of this conference will become evident in each local school situation as well as in our school system of Canadian Reformed Schools. May the Lord bless all our endeavours.

For the Convention,
Arthur Kingma



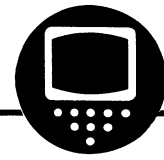
COVENANT

Canadian Reformed Teachers' College



Students currently attending Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College.

Back row from left to right: Dr. W. Helder, Mr. T. VanderVen, Jeanette Ravensbergen, Debbie deBoer, Mrs. D. Van Huisstede (secretary), Miss T. Hutten, Mr. A. Witten, Mr. W. Horsman. Third row: Adria Schuller, Brenda Jansen, Robin Van Driel, Heather Berends, and Elsa DeVries. Second row: Lisa Kegel, Marian VanWoudenberg, Charlene Sluys, Esther Buist. Front row: Jennifer de Leeuw, Darlene Flokstra, Miriam den Hollander, Anne-Marie Jonker, Petra Blom, and Marianne Vanderboom. Absent: Mrs. E. Boeringa



Regional Synod East 1990, November 14, 1990 at Orangeville, Ontario.

Opening.

On behalf of the convening church at Orangeville Rev. W. den Hollander calls the meeting to order. He requests that Ps. 47 stanzas 2 and 3 be sung and reads Col. 1:9-23. In prayer a blessing is asked over the meeting. Rev. den Hollander welcomes the delegates and guests. He expresses the hope that this meeting may serve the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Examination of Credentials.

The credentials are examined by Rev. B.R. Hofford and Rev. P. Kingma and found to be in good order.

Election of Offices.

Chairman: Rev. W. den Hollander
Clerk: Rev. B.R. Hofford
Vice-chairman: Rev. D.G.J. Agema
Regional Synod East 1990 is declared constituted.

Adoption of Agenda.

After some changes the agenda is adopted.

Correspondence.

- A. A letter from the Church at Brampton regarding travel expenses. It is decided to increase the reimbursement for travel expenses to \$0.25 per kilometer.
- B. A letter from the Church at Grand Rapids. This letter is read in closed session.

Appeals.

An appeal of four former members of the American Reformed Church at Grand Rapids against the decisions of Classis Ontario South of June 13, 1990 is dealt with in closed session.

Reports.

- A. The report of the treasurer, br. P.L. Schuller, covering the financial period Nov. 1, 1989 to Nov. 6, 1990 is read. The assessment is set at \$1.50 per communicant member. This report is gratefully received and the treasurer is discharged of his duties regarding this financial period. Upon his request br. Schuller is honorably released of his duties as treasurer.
- B. Report from the church at Lincoln stating that the books of the treasurer have been audited and were found to be in good order. This report is gratefully received.
- C. Report from the church at Brampton, stating that the archives are in good order. This report is gratefully received.
- D. Deputies ad Art. 48 C.O.
 1. Rev. P.G. Feenstra and Rev. J. Mulder report on the retirement of Dr. J. Faber as it was approved by Classis Contracta Ontario South of December 20, 1989.
 2. Rev. P.G. Feenstra and Rev. G. Nederveen report on the retirement of Dr. K. Deddens as it was approved by Classis Ontario South of March 21, 1990.

Appointments

- A. Treasurer: br. D. VanAmerongen. (Address: 342 Russ Road, RR 1, Grimsby, ON, L3M 1X9)
- B. Deputies ad Article 48 C.O. For Classis North: Rev. Cl. Stam and Rev. J. VanRietschoten; alternate Rev. D.G.J. Agema
For Classis South: Rev. P.G. Feenstra and Rev. J. Mulder; alternate Rev. G. Nederveen
- C. Church for auditing the books of the treasurer: Lincoln
- D. Church for maintaining the archives: Toronto
- E. Church for checking the archives: Brampton
- F. Convening church for next Regional Synod: Smithville. Suggested time: November 13, 1991

Personal Question Period.

Rev. W. Boessenkool, minister emeritus of the Vrije Gereformeerde Kerk at Johannesburg, South Africa, who was present as guest, expresses his gratitude for being present at this Synod.

Censure ad Art. 44 C.O.

This censure is not made use of.

Acts and Press Release.

The acts are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved.

Closing.

The vice-chairman leads in prayer of thanksgiving and the chairman closes Regional Synod East 1990.

For Regional Synod East 1990
D.G.J. Agema, vice chairman e.t.



OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

Don't you think it's time for a New Contest!? So many busy Beavers write great stories and poems! Take your pick! Or do both! Write a story, or if you like that better, write a poem. Here is a title and a beginning for your story. Grab your pen, use your imagination, and away we go!

Two Friends Have an Adventure

It was Friday afternoon and Chris was allowed to have a friend sleep over! They jumped off the bus, hurried down the road and over the bridge. They were excited! Suddenly –
"Look, Chris, over there!"...

BIRTHDAY WISHES

Happy Birthday to all the Busy Beavers who celebrate a February birthday!
May the Lord bless and guide you in the coming year. Here's hoping you have a super day celebrating with your family and friends!
And many happy returns of the day!

February

Adrian Bartels	1	Dennis Van Oene	14
Shanna Bartels	2	Francine Van	
Thelma Blom	2	Woudenberg	16
Hannah Helder	2	Lucy 't Hart	17
Henrietta de Witt	3	Wendy Jansen	17
Mark Timmerman	3	Peter Barendregt	21
Linda Van Sydenborgh	3	Laura Breukelman	22
Tony Bikker	7	Cara Faber	24
Judy Bijsterveld	11	Linda Stam	26
Krista Werkman	13	Anya Malda	27
Rebecca Hovius	14	Carolyn Van Anandel	28



FROM THE MAILBOX

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, Hilmer Jagersma. We are happy to have you join us. I see you are a good story writer. Will you join in our new contest?

Welcome to the Club, Vickie Aikema. Thank you for a lovely *big* letter! I think you should join in our new contest, too, Vickie! Bye for now

And a big welcome to you, too, David Aikema. The Busy Beavers are sure to enjoy your riddles. Thank you! I'm looking forward to hearing from you again.

How is your goat doing, Francine Van Woudenberg? and how did your project turn out? What did you do it on? Did you have a good holiday from school, Francine?

Hello, Michelle Hordyk. Did you see the list of pen pals in the *Clarion* #24 of Nov. 23, 1990? Lots of people to choose

from, right? They will like a letter from you with a story about your gerbils! Bye for now, Michelle.

Thank you for writing, Gerald Bartels. It's always good to hear from you Busy Beavers. What do you like best about living on a farm, Gerald? Will you say "Thank you" to your brother for his tiger picture? He did not put his name on it.

FOR YOU TO COLOUR

From Busy Beaver *Francine Vanwoudenberg*



Quiz Time!

MAGIC CODE!

by Busy Beaver *Elissa Faber*

Figure out these problems to solve the code below.

D=6+3=_____ O=10+2=_____

E=8+2=_____ S= 5+2=_____

G=9+4=_____ U=10+4=_____

L=7+1=_____ V=10+5=_____

13 12 9 8 12 15 10 7 14 7!

